

CfBT Inspection Services
Suite 22

West Lancs Investment Centre T 0300 123 1231

Maple View
Skelmersdale

WN8 9TG

Text Phone: 0161 6188524 **Direct T** 01695 566857

enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk **Direct F** 01695 729320

www.ofsted.gov.uk

Direct email: jkinsman@cfbt.com

30 April 2015

Mrs Helen McCormick
Acting Headteacher
Haydon Bridge High School
Haydon Bridge
Hexham
Northumberland
NE47 6LR

Dear Mrs McCormick

Special measures monitoring inspection of Haydon Bridge High School

Following my visit to your school with Suzanne Lithgow, Her Majesty's Inspector, on 29 April 2015, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to confirm the inspection findings. Thank you for the help you gave during the inspection and for the time you made available to discuss the actions which have been taken since the school's recent section 5 inspection.

The inspection was the first monitoring inspection since the school became subject to special measures following the inspection which took place in December 2014.

Evidence

During this inspection, meetings were held with the headteacher, the Chair and the Vice-Chair of the Interim Executive Body (IEB), representatives of the local authority and the interim manager of the associated boarding provision, Ridley Hall. The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan were evaluated.

Context

An IEB has been very recently established. The substantive headteacher and the deputy headteacher have left the school. The acting headteacher who was in post at the time of the previous inspection continues to lead the school. The head of English has also left. There are currently four teaching posts covered by long term supply teachers. The school is exploring the possibility of becoming an academy.

The quality of leadership and management at the school

The acting headteacher and the newly formed IEB are acutely aware of the scale of the task ahead of them. Improvements to the school have been slow to get off the ground. This is due in part to the complexity of establishing the IEB, which has been a long and somewhat tortuous process. There have also been some difficult staffing issues to unpick. However, these difficulties are now largely resolved, although there are still some important appointments to be made before the autumn term. The acting headteacher, supported by the local authority, has taken a long hard look at the leadership structure of the school and she is in the process of making some changes to improve the effectiveness of the team.

The previous inspection highlighted failures in the school's safeguarding procedures. Staff have taken effective action to make sure that records of incidents or concerns are kept, stored and monitored. All staff have attended safeguarding training and three senior leaders have attended enhanced training.

The local authority and the Vice-Chair of the IEB have supported the school in improving the systems to share and record information about students between the school and staff at the associated boarding provision, Ridley Hall. This improvement is very recent and it is too soon for the systems to be fully embedded.

Actions to improve attendance have not had enough impact. This is partly because previously inaccurate recording masked the scale of the problem. Nevertheless, students' attendance remains below the national average and the number of students who are persistently absent is too high.

The local authority's statement of action is a helpful document which is clearly linked to the areas identified as needing improvement at the previous inspection. However, it lacks detail about how progress will be measured at different points in time.

The school's action plan also focuses on the right priorities with timescales for improvement. It identifies what success will look like and this will help members of the IEB to check on progress. However, the specific actions for senior leaders, teachers and students are too vague and this detail often sits in other documents. This makes it difficult for the whole school community to understand exactly what is expected of them.

Senior leaders have worked with partner schools to provide training for teachers. For example, all the teaching staff have attended literacy training. However, it is not clear how effective this has been because leaders' checks on the quality of teaching do not focus sharply enough on how teachers are putting their training into practice.

The school has not undertaken a review of its use of the pupil premium funding. However the local authority's Pupil Premium Champion is now a member of the IEB and the review is being given priority.

Following the monitoring inspection the following judgements were made:

The local authority's statement of action and the school's action plan are fit for purpose.

The school may not appoint newly qualified teachers before the next monitoring inspection.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State, the Chair of the Interim Executive Board, the Director of Children's Services for Northumberland and as below. This letter will be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Joan Hewitt
Senior Her Majesty's Inspector